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ESTABLISHMENT OF A TEXTILE CENTRE

DP/MAL/88/006

MALAYSIA

Terminal report*

Prepared for the Government of Malaysia
by the United Nations Industrial Development Organization,
acting as executing agency for the United Nations Development Programme

Based on the work of Peter W. Morgan
Textile adviser

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United Nations Industrial Development Organization
Vienna

* This document has not been edited.

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Introduction

This final report should be read in conjunction with the two previous reports already submitted to the U.N.D.P. Office - Kuala Lumpur and U.N.I.D.O. - Vienna:

1. Textile Study Tour - July 1989
2. Malaysian Textile + Apparel Centre Report - 14 August 1989

The three month visit to Malaysia from 28 May to 27 August 1989 divided naturally into three distinct phases:

- | | | |
|----------|-------------------|---|
| Phase 1. | <u>Weeks 1-2</u> | Development of a preliminary work plan and preparation for the study tour. |
| Phase 2. | <u>Weeks 3-7</u> | Study tour and submission of evaluation report - (week 8) |
| Phase 3. | <u>Weeks 9-13</u> | Development of the Textile Centre Proposal report (submitted at the end of week 12) and final report. |

Phase 1

The time spent at the Institut Teknologi - MARA prior to the Study Tour proved to be extremely valuable. It enabled me to evaluate what I saw at I.T.M. - its standards of achievement, level of expertise, facilities etc., which would have a direct bearing on its capacity to manage the Textile Centre as stated consistently in the original proposal submitted to the U.N.D.P. Office, Kuala Lumpur. The impression I gained in those first few days caused me great concern. The obvious lack of investment by I.T.M. in the only Apparel/Textile courses in Malaysia made me believe that this institution had not adequately demonstrated its ability to develop such an important new Centre.

It soon became apparent that the proposed 'Textile Centre' was causing anxiety among many staff in the Faculty of Art and Design. Only three or four staff seemed to have had any involvement and knowledge of the proposal and most staff seemed very apprehensive as they appeared not to have been kept informed during the many months when meetings of the Steering Committee had taken place. I was, in fact, asked, after two or three days, to explain to the Art and Design staff details and implications of the proposals which, at this particular time I knew as little about as they did themselves. There were certainly internal staffing problems, which I discovered much later, had caused some dissension and lack of interest among some Art and Design staff. It did not seem to be a very positive and healthy atmosphere in which to establish a national 'Textile Centre'.

Although a Steering Committee, consisting of members from the Malaysian Textile Manufacturers Association, Ministry of Education, Economic Planning Unit, Ministry of Trade and Industry and staff from I.T.M., had been working on the proposal for many months, no-one at I.T.M. appeared to have a clear idea of exactly what was happening and who was directly and ultimately responsible. This was most apparent in the few days before the Study Tour when the U.N.D.P. Office had great difficulty in establishing who exactly from I.T.M. was going to participate in the tour. The co-ordinator for the project only knew two or three days before we left that he was to be included!

Although this time was not wasted, more thought should have been given to how best it could have been effectively used, e.g. only one industrial visit took place, there was ample time to do more. I asked to see someone from the M.T.M.A.,* but this did not happen. In retrospect it was an unfortunate time to arrive because staff were involved with end of year examinations and assessments and the co-ordinator knew so little about the proposal and its implementations that he was unable to give any guidance whatsoever.

* Malaysian Textile Manufacturers' Association

Phase 2

The individual visits on the tour were variable in their relevance to the 'Textile Centre', but together they provided a broad spectrum of experience which was invaluable for later deliberations. The range of visits, while generally comprehensive, was biased towards textiles as opposed to apparel. This was most apparent during the tour of Japan which was heavily textile orientated in both production and machinery. Although the Japanese were thorough and accommodating, it was impossible to change the schedule at short notice to include more apparel companies particularly those using advanced technology.

The visits to educational establishments were well organised and relevant. The information gathered and contacts made in a variety of different educational institutions should be of great help to the proposed expansion of apparel/textile education in Malaysia as part of the 'Textile Centre'.

The practical aspects of the Study Tour (travel and accommodation) worked well up to and including New York. However, we all believed that the U.N.I.D.O. visit was unnecessary and that the week between New York and Indonesia could have been better utilised particularly when we were in Europe.

The report on the Study Tour, with its initial concept for the proposed 'Textile Centre', was presented to the Steering Committee as well as to the U.N.D.P. Office, Kuala Lumpur at the end of Week Eight.

The summary of the tour, which was included in the 'Textile Study Tour report, is also appended to this final report.

Phase 3

The Steering Committee, having accepted the broad outlines of the Study Tour report, gave the team approximately sixteen working days to prepare a more detailed report. This was to include a week of visits to a variety of apparel/textile companies to establish the training needs of industry which would result in detailed proposals for training courses, new course proposals for education, a comprehensive list of equipment for both training and education, staffing requirements and financial estimates. This was to be achieved by myself and four Malaysian colleagues, all of whom had on-going teaching/administrative duties at I.T.M., as well as two of them having no experience of apparel/textile industry and education other than their study tour participation. One of these contributed nothing, the other organized the administrative assistance during this period.

It is my professional opinion that given the circumstances I have outlined, it was an impossible task. I expressed this frankly in Appendix Eleven - Consultants Comments, in the 'Malaysian Textile and Apparel Centre' proposal which was submitted to the Chairman of the Steering Committee on 15 August.

The Chairman reacted very negatively to the report and, before circulating it to members of the committee for discussion on 19 August, had Appendix Eleven removed. His objection was to paragraph two - where I expressed my opinion that the 'Centre' should not be at I.T.M.

I insisted that the whole of Appendix Eleven should be brought to the attention of the committee as there were other points that also need airing. This was finally, but reluctantly, agreed to. I learned later, in a private conversation with the Chairman of the M.T.M.A., that there is no way in which they will become involved with the 'Centre' unless it is totally independent of I.T.M.

Between August 15th and August 19th further work involving staffing and financial estimates were undertaken at the request of the Steering Committee Chairman. I was unaware of this until the meeting on August 19th and it confirms my view that no accurate proposal can be finalised until more research is undertaken and the implications of this research fully understood.

The report is now, more accurately, accepted as a preliminary report and my Malaysian colleagues, with help from the M.T.M.A. have been given a further two months to prepare and consolidate a final report. This is to include a 'Research and Development Division' which, in the original proposal, was seen as a later addition evolving from a stronger expanded educational base.

Although I hope that the proposal for the Centre is accepted in its entirety, my belief is that with the current situation in Malaysia regarding the shortage of labour, the Training Division will get priority and is all that is likely to be established.

Appendix Eleven of the 'Malaysian Textile and Apparel Centre' report is also appended to this report.

Annex 1

Consultant's summary of the 'Textile Study Tour' report, July 1989

This report contains a detailed description of the individual visits to education, research institutes, training centres, textile and garment manufacturers that took place on the study tour. The information which follows indicates some areas that should be taken into consideration when final decisions are being made regarding the establishment and role of the Textile Centre. They should not be interpreted in any specific manner until further study has been completed.

The few days I was able to spend in Malaysia before the study tour enabled me to gain an impression, reasonably accurate I believe, of the educational provision in fashion and textiles at the Mara Institute of Technology. This proved to be most instructive as I was able to evaluate what I observed on the tour against the perspective of what I had seen at I.T.M. Any recommendations for the proposed Textile Centre must be seen against and take into account this educational background. The three Diploma courses of Fashion Design, Textile Design and Textile Technology were instituted some sixteen years ago. Since that period it appears that little investment has taken place in premises, equipment, machinery, course curriculum or staff development. All departments, whatever enthusiasm individual staff members may have, are operating at a very basic and unsophisticated level, particularly Textile Technology which needs almost total re-equipping.

The tour was extensive and wide-ranging enabling us to observe areas that could be relevant to the development of a Malaysian Textile Centre and of equal importance areas which would not. The majority of visits on the tour took place in highly sophisticated and industrialised countries which, while being of great interest, bore sometimes very little relevance to the immediate and short term needs of Malaysia. However, these visits did highlight the immense capital and continuing investment that must take place if the centre is seriously able to help and advise the Malaysian apparel and textile industries in the future.

It is unfortunate that the proposed visit to the Textile Design Centre in Thailand was unable to take place. Observation and understanding of how a similar country and competitor in world markets has successfully operated a centre which has apparently improved that design input of its apparel and textile industries would have been most instructive. A visit to the new National Fashion Institute of Technology, - New Dehli, founded in 1987, and to one or two other colleges like the Institute of Design - Ahmedabad would also have been helpful. I understand that this was initially considered by the Malaysian planning team but rejected on safety grounds! A definite mistake but perhaps both visits can take place before the Textile Centre plans are finally formalised and adopted?

I believe that the most relevant part of the visit was to Hong Kong. Because of the importance of the garment and textile industries to its economy, approximately 40% of all manufacturing is in these two areas, it has developed over many years a superb infrastructure of training, education, research and marketing to serve the needs of its most important industry. It is an almost unique situation because of the concentration of a highly skilled labour force in a small geographical area with no natural resources. While it contains many role-models that can be adapted for a Malaysian Textile Centre this single most important fact must be borne in mind.

At this stage it would be premature to give any recommendations in this study tour report about the framework and terms of reference for the Textile Centre as one major point which was stressed many times was the importance of consultation with industry. At present, I have been unable to do so, though it is planned shortly, neither have I been able to discover any form of basic research that had been compiled on the structure and needs of both the apparel and textile industries in Malaysia prior to the study tour.

What I would strongly recommend, however, is that the term 'Textile Centre' be discarded immediately. This caused great confusion on the tour as the word 'textile(s)' internationally is generally considered to be the manufacture of cloth.

Much of what we saw was in this area because this was how our hosts had interpreted the phrase 'Textile Study Tour'.

I would advise that in future the centre becomes known as the 'Apparel and Textile Centre' or vice versa, as this will include both the manufacture of cloth and garments. After all, in 1986, of the 182 'textile' factories in Malaysia, 152 were in garment manufacturing!

Annex 2

Consultant's comments to the project proposal on the establishment of a Malaysian Textile and Apparel Centre, dated 14 August 1989

The need for an Apparel and Textile Centre has been enthusiastically supported by everyone who has been asked to contribute to the investigation for this study. I hope that it will evolve in the broad manner which has been proposed and that narrow sectional self interests will not seek to independently develop different areas. I believe that the whole concept will provide a much needed focus for the apparel/textile industry and education and should become a tremendous asset for Malaysia. There are, however, certain points that need to be seriously considered.

It gives me great cause for concern that the Centre could be under the umbrella of I.T.M. as consistently stated in the U.N.D.P. document MAL/88/006. Its educational policy of being an institution for Bumiputras, if carried through to the Centre, would be quite inappropriate particularly as the industry is dominated by the Malaysian Chinese. The Centre is to be successful needs to attract the best staff and students from any of the Malaysian ethnic groups. As education is proposed as one of the major divisions in the Centre, I believe it is essential that the re-grouping of the current apparel/textile courses at I.T.M. must take place under an independent body. There are no other educational opportunities in the apparel/textile area elsewhere in Malaysia and both staff and students operating in an educationally protected environment are not exposed to the very competitive nature of the apparel/textile world. An influx of new students and an exit of uncommitted staff occasioned by a new independent centre would dispel the air of complacency I believe exists in some, not all, areas of apparel/textile education at I.T.M. Additionally, the run-down state of the apparel/textile courses, the low level of resourcing in accommodation, equipment and machinery caused greatly by the obvious consistent lack of investment and staff complacency does not give me confidence in I.T.M.'s ability to nurture and develop the Centre in a positive and enlightened way.

The amount of time allowed for some aspects of the research for this proposal has been minimal as most of it could not take place until after the completion of the study tour, the subsequent study tour report and its presentation to the steering committee. The timescale was insufficient for the in-depth investigation and feedback that is required to give other than very broad outlines.

A very thorough analytical research project needs to be undertaken immediately and completed quickly to investigate at all levels of the apparel/textile industry, exactly what is required for training purposes. Although certain conclusions and recommendations have been made visits to six large apparel/textile companies, four specialist batik/songket producers and one button manufacturer does not give the breadth of investigation and accuracy to forecast training demands other than confirm that training at all levels is required. As possible training courses, staffing and equipment have been suggested they must be seen circumspectively, particularly in relation to financing, given the very short timescale that was allowed.

I have a similar concern for education. Enthusiasm has not always been able to be tempered by personal experience and a clear understanding of the subject matter of new course proposals. Equipment, staffing and financing must be seen against this background. Undoubtedly there is a great and unique opportunity for education to consolidate, strengthen and expand into the areas advised in Appendix One. It is right that there is ambition to venture into new fields as without it nothing will ever be achieved. Thorough investigation and preparation must take place to establish the need for new courses and an adequate level of resourcing must be provided once the decision has been made to implement new proposals. In some areas current courses have operated under such great difficulties that provision must be made to ensure that staff become thoroughly trained and experienced with all new equipment, particularly computer-aided equipment, so that they can prepare and operate effectively the curriculae for new and expanded courses.

The success of the Centre will depend a great deal on the appointment of staff. They will come from industry, education and, if necessary, expatriates to temporarily provide the experience that may be unavailable in Malaysia. As there will be a substantial time lag between government agreement for the Centre and its opening, there should be ample time. If decisions are made speedily, to identify and appoint key staff who will need to obtain specialist knowledge and training e.g. a librarian to acquire specialist apparel/textile knowledge through secondment to overseas institutions - a lecturer to acquire knowledge on curriculum development for a new footwear/accessory course - staff to Hong Kong Training Authority to investigate all aspects of this impressive organisation and its relevance to the Training Division. The time allowed for thorough preparation before the Centre starts to operate should result in fewer wrong decisions being made at a later date.

It has been a worthwhile and unique privilege for me to work on this proposal with my Malaysian colleagues. Any new venture will have problems and need time to mature, but if I am ever in Malaysia again I hope I shall be able to visit a flourishing Centre which I am convinced will be making a great contribution to education and the apparel/textile industry of Malaysia.

Annex 3 - Job Description



UNITED NATIONS INDUSTRIAL DEVELOPMENT ORGANIZATION

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PROJECT FOR THE GOVERNMENT OF MALAYSIA

JOB DESCRIPTION

DP/MAL/88/006/11-01/J13102

Post title	Textile Adviser
Duration	Three months
Date required	March/April 1989
Duty station	Kuala Lumpur
Purpose of project	To assist the Government in developing a concept and outline of a textile centre with special emphasis on the design of textiles and garments
Duties	Attached to the MARA Institute of Technology (ITM) the adviser will <ul style="list-style-type: none">- review existing plans for the establishment of a textile centre and the industry's requirements for intended services and outputs;- accompany four Malaysian counterparts on an extensive study tour to Indonesia, Thailand, Hong Kong, Japan, USA and Austria to visit textile institutions in these countries;- outline the concept for a textile centre in Malaysia, including possible exchange activities with other centres in the region, covering its activities, facilities, staff requirements, training needs and time frame, and identifying the elements of external assistance that might be required to realize the plan.

Application and communications regarding this Job Description should be sent to
Project Personnel Recruitment Section, Industrial Operations Division
UNIDO, VIENNA INTERNATIONAL CENTRE, P.O. Box 300, Vienna, Austria

Qualifications Textile or garment technologist, with extensive textile institute experience. Specific knowledge of design and fashion activities essential.

Language English

Background information The textile industry in Malaysia covers both primary processing (spinning, weaving and dyeing/finishing) and the manufacture of garments. In addition, there is a significant craft sector producing batik prints.

In the industrial sector there are 182 factories of which 151 garment factories. The total exports of textiles and garments in 1986 was M\$ 1.6 billion (= US\$ 540 million). This sector is the second largest exporter among manufacturing industries and its export earnings are increasing.

One of the industry's problems is its inability to produce high quality products in keeping with the fashion and design requirements of the international markets. The Industrial Master Plan (IMP) has therefore recommended the establishment of a Textile Centre to obtain and disseminate to the industry up-to-date information on fashion and design trends in printed fabrics and garments and to assist small garment manufacturers in upgrading their products for export markets. This project aims to identify the needs of the industry and to outline the functions of the contemplated centre in order to enable the Government to take steps towards its realization.